



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

MOROCCO

Date: February 17, 2006

HIGHLIGHTS FROM MOROCCO

USAID's Strategy in Meknes-Tafilalet On Track



On February 12th, USAID presented its regional program to the Wali of the Meknes-Tafilalet region, one of the poorest areas in the country. Over 10% of the USAID's five-year budget for Morocco will be spent on activities targeting this region. The 2004-2008 program is focused on three priority areas. In education and training for employment, USAID is aiming for a 30% decrease in drop-outs in a quarter of the region's middle schools, 500 women becoming literate), and multimedia centers established in four middle schools. Economic growth in the region will be achieved through a 25% increase in the demand for certified olive plants, a 25% growth in production and an improvement of 15% in the productivity of targeted agricultural zones. In the governance area, USAID will train 60 local development professionals, help improve sub-standard, non-regulated housing for about 2,000 households and

introduce participatory strategic planning systems. All participants, including the Wali, his staff and the elected president of the Regional Council, unanimously expressed their satisfaction with the quality of USAID programs. The Wali underlined that USAID approach meshes very well with the INDH (Initiative National pour la Développement Humaine) launched by King Mohammed VI last year to address social gaps in the country.

Acknowledgment of USAID's Assistance for Regional Economic Development

"Thank you USAID, your assistance was truly valuable. We enjoyed an exciting experience with skillful, patient and professional experts. They helped us become aware of our huge potential and our capacity to carry out activities that we often commission from very costly consulting firms. Through the expert assessment, we became aware of the vast potential of our region: quality infrastructure, the region's location, its area, its resources, and especially the quality living conditions. However, the assessment also opened our eyes to our weaknesses, which we are required to remedy, and we have already started to take action for improvement. We hope that our effort in implementing the strategy will serve as a model, and that we will be a pilot region in promoting the selected sectors (automotive, aeronautic, electronic industries) and in promoting education (e.g. English language). We look forward to your continued assistance to the Regional Investment Centers." **Mohamed Ali Adhmi**, Wali of the Chaouia-Ouardigha Region, during a meeting on "Promotion of Regional Investment," Settat (November 25, 2005).



Washington visitors for MEPI programs. Christine Adamczyk from USAID/DCHA and Crystal Meriwether from NEA/PI visited Morocco to monitor the Arab Civitas and Children Resources International Programs. Joined in Casablanca by USAID staff, the team visited a teacher training center, and took a part in discussion with students and teachers benefiting from the program at primary and secondary school. Feedback from the Ministry of National Education (MNE) officials in Casablanca, partners and beneficiaries showed that the program is highly valued, as evidenced by the intention to make it an integral part of the regional curriculum.

USAID meets MEPI implementers. On January 19, USAID held a meeting with MEPI implementers NDI, IRI, ABA, FSVC, ATA and Civitas. Scheduled on a quarterly basis, the meeting provided an opportunity to share information between USAID and MEPI activity implementers, to discuss new communication materials and brief on major performance highlights during the last quarter. During the meeting, the MEPI coordinator presented the content and format of the newly released MEPI Newsletter and encouraged all grantees to provide comments on its format and contributions for the next edition that will be released soon.



Who Are Morocco's Youth and What They Think?

For over ten years - since 1994 - there had been no field survey in Morocco about youth, what they think, what they do, and how they do it. The results from a survey sponsored by daily *L'Economiste* and *Sunergia* among 776 young people aged 16 to 29 during the fall 2005, are very surprising.

Learning about sex? Boys and girls generally do so from experience. 64 percent of girls stated they do not use any contraceptives. Another interesting finding: almost nobody among the young men and women surveyed spontaneously mentioned the religious beliefs as a barrier to sex.

For 44 percent of young Moroccans aged 16-29, Al Qaida is not a terrorist organization. This sensitive question was asked in September 2005, which is before two Moroccan citizens, Boualem and Mouhafidi, were taken hostage on October 20 in Iraq. It is not known if this capture and the still uncertain fate of these two would change opinions among youth or not. At the time of the survey, 38 percent of the sample answered they did not know if Al Qaida was a terrorist organization or not. Does this high unawareness rate reflect true unawareness or a desire not to share one's opinion?

A few findings from among Morocco's young people...

- **99% observe Ramadan fasting**
- **70% pray**
- **49% of males prefer a veiled woman**
- **73% of males will never marry a non-Moslem woman**
- **44% think Al Qaida is not a terrorist organization**
- **57% are in favor of veils for women**
- **95% do not belong to any political party**
- **68% do not trust politics**
- **73% find that their representatives represent them badly**

Morocco's youth are quite imbued with religious beliefs as well as superstitions although 66 percent of the sample "do not believe in the power of saints," a tradition Moroccan religious belief that appears to be dying out. Two thirds of young people aged 16-29 "believe in the power of djinns" and 59 percent "believe in witchcraft." A large majority (79 percent of surveyed young people) are against polygamy. The new generations mostly reject this lifestyle, especially girls: 88 percent of young women are against polygamy, contrasted with "only" 69 percent of young men.

Young people are in total disagreement on the role of religion in politics: 32 percent said "religion should guide political parties," 37 percent disagreed, and the remaining third said they "do not know."

Oil Prices Hit Home

The Moroccan government raised the centrally-set fuel prices again this week in a bid to ease the pressure on government finances stemming from the increasing world petroleum prices. Diesel prices were raised 7.2% to MAD7.46 per liter (US\$0.817 per liter); petrol prices increased 1.5% to MAD10.51 a liter and industrial fuel by 14.8% to MAD3.307/tn. Morocco relies completely on imports to meet its energy requirements. The authorities have limited the increase in diesel prices, given that it accounts for almost half of fuel consumption and its importance to the agricultural and transport sectors. The move will naturally put upward pressure on the inflation rate which will also prove unpopular with the local population.



Events in March 2006:

- Environmental Compliance training
- ICT Awards Ceremony (Microsoft/GOM)
- International Agriculture/Agribusiness Forum